

PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN – Luke 10:25-37

“Evidence of Salvation—Love Your Neighbours!”

A lawyer in the Bible was a person well versed in the laws of God, especially the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch. The age old problem of doing something to gain salvation is the bane of man’s existence and the condemnation of many ignorant souls who died in their sin and are now tragically languishing in hell from which there is no escape. The name of this arrogant and self righteous lawyer is not stated but he came to tempt the Lord. This was no mere temptation but a severe one. This nameless lawyer probably believed that he would succeed where others failed in tricking the Lord with an unanswerable quandary. The word “tempt” means “to test thoroughly.” The purpose of this lawyer was to test the Lord Jesus Christ thoroughly to get the Lord Jesus Christ to attest to his self-righteousness in front of all the people!

Believers today are little better than the lawyer. Self-righteousness is fodder for pride which feeds man’s ego. This is like a horse leech that sucks all the blood and will never have enough! Such is the pride of man that seeks to boast even in salvation! There is much that all professing believers can learn from this encounter between the lawyer and Christ!

I. In Search of Eternal Life (10:25-29) – The Pharisees and the scribes or lawyers were well known in all Israel as the most righteous of all. This was true because Christ mentioned their righteousness in His Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 5:20** “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Christ used the best and highest form of righteousness by works to teach the multitude that even the best righteousness of man on earth is not good enough for God to open to him the gates of heaven! It has to be a righteousness that exceeds even the best! It is true that of all the righteousness that could be gained by good works, there is no one on earth who could come close to what the Pharisees and scribes did. All the good works of man in Gentile nations were based upon man-made and idolatrous good works. They were not ordained by God. However, the good works kept by the Pharisees and scribes were all ordained by God. Their good works included the dietary laws, the kind of garments to wear and not to wear, the yearly religious feasts, how to spend their weeks by keeping the Sabbath day holy, the Levitical system of sacrifices, etc. These were kept by the Pharisees and scribes religiously and legally! They were the best of the best in keeping the good works ordained by God.

With such an amazing reputation, this lawyer came to Christ feeling very confident that Christ would pat him on the back and cite him as an example of one who would enter into the kingdom of heaven! In all boldness, he came to Christ and announced, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” What audacity and arrogance projected by the smug lawyer who knew the Word of God very well but tragically not the God of the Word! If he had known the God of the Word, then he would have recognized Jesus of Nazareth as the

Christ. He would not have dared ask what he must do to be saved, for all believers since the fall of Adam would have known that salvation has always been by grace through faith in Christ!

The Lord Jesus Christ went along with this lawyer's "temptation." He asked him, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" This implies that the lawyer had access to the written Word of God. The reply was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." These are the two greatest commandments from which hang all the laws and the prophets! If someone is able to keep these two commandments, it is equal to obeying all the laws and teachings in the Bible! This is the truth, for the Lord Jesus Christ replied in the affirmative, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." Using the present imperative in the verb "do," the Lord meant that if he was able to keep on doing this forever, i.e. to love God with all his heart, soul, strength and mind and his neighbour as himself, he would have eternal life! The lawyer knew that he could not do it; he knew that the moment he did not love God with all his heart, soul, strength and mind even for a brief moment, i.e. perfectly, he would fail and he would not have eternal life.

The only people on earth who can love God (with God's Agape love which is unconditional and sacrificial) with all their heart, soul, strength and mind are truly born again believers. The reason is that they have been given this Agape from God when they were saved. The Holy Spirit shed abroad, i.e. placed, this love of God, or sometimes called the love of Christ, into the heart of every believer at the point of salvation. **Romans 5:5** "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." This enables believers to love God forever with this love and they can do so perfectly. God sees this love in the heart of every believer. This positional love that every believer expresses toward God is a gift from God. This must not be confused with the experiential agape love that every believer needs to exercise toward all his fellow man, friends and foes alike! This love protects the believer from the sin of bitterness when he serves God and is persecuted for it. He must keep on serving because of this love that he has for his God. He gives his life to strangers in the course of giving the gospel and is persecuted for it because of this love that he has received in his heart from God. Christ was saying to the lawyer that all who have this love of God will have eternal life.

His pride would not allow him to humble himself in the presence of the people gathered there. Instead, he justified himself. He said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" He tried to divert the attention from his failure to love God perfectly to asking who his neighbour was! He answered a question that he had no answer to by asking another question! What a sad condition of heart this proud lawyer had. Jesus Christ, who knew his heart, still wanted to reach out to him to save him from his sin and pride. He gave the parable of the good Samaritan!

II. The False Mark of Eternal Life (10:30-32) – It is not stated that the “certain man” was a Jew but most likely he was, as he was coming from Jerusalem. Most would go to Jerusalem for worship, i.e. to offer their sacrifices. As he was coming down he was waylaid by thieves. He was stripped of his raiment. He was wounded and the thieves left him half dead by the side of the road. Then Jesus said that a certain priest came down also from Jerusalem. He passed the same way as the injured Jew. The priest saw the injured man but he passed on by the other side. He refused to see and investigate whether he could help one of his own. Most likely the priest would have completed his worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. If he had been on his way to Jerusalem to do his service as priest, then he would have had a legitimate excuse. If the injured man had been dead, which the priest would not know unless he went near to him, he would have been made unclean from contact with a dead man. He would have been disqualified from serving in the Temple until the next day after he went through ceremonial cleansing. However, he was coming down from Jerusalem, which means that he had no excuse. In fact, after serving the LORD in the Temple one would have thought that he would be in a state of spirituality and holiness and to help a fellow human being would be the first thing he would do. Sadly, in this parable Jesus said that the priest just walked away and did not bother to assist.

The second person to walk by was a Levite. Levites were assistants to the priests during worship. They would be the second most holy people on earth after the priests! Like the priest before him, the Levite came down from Jerusalem with no spiritual responsibility before him. He came to where the injured man laid. He did one thing better than the priest who looked from a distance, in that he drew near to the injured man and looked on him (the same verb for “looked” was used). He investigated to see if the injured man was dead or alive. He found him alive but did nothing to help. He responded in the same manner as the priest and “passed by on the other side.” His heart was just as callous as that of the priest. These two men, who were supposed to be the most holy people on earth in relation to the one living and true God, did nothing to help. Like the lawyer, both of them probably thought that they loved God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind. Yet they did nothing to help a man in great dire need.

False religion is exemplified here by these two most religious men on earth! They had all the external trappings of one who served and loved God. But that was all they had . . . the external facade of religiosity before God and for all men to see. They wore their religious garbs designed by God since the time of Moses. They had just performed their religious duties as the mediators between God and the people of God. Yet they were far from God and eternal life; they had all the trappings of one who demonstrated the form of salvation but lacked the essence! Loving God and loving men cannot be separated.

III. The True Mark of Eternal Life (10:33-37) – This love of God is seen in the next traveller. Jesus did not say that he came from Jerusalem because he would not be welcomed in Jerusalem as the Jews regarded Samaritans who were half Jews and half Gentiles as unclean. He also came by the same way where the injured man laid. Using the same verbs “came”, “looked” and “saw”, the Lord said that the Samaritan had compassion on the injured man. This is the biggest difference among the three of them. The word “compassion” literally has the idea of a person’s bowels yearning, i.e. to feel sympathy. The Samaritan was moved within his soul upon seeing the man so grievously injured. He could not help himself but went near to the injured man. All thoughts of his own safety and inconvenience fled from his heart. He was not thinking of himself at all but only the injured man who needed his help. He bound up his wounds. He poured oil and wine to soothe and to cleanse the wound. Then he set the injured man onto his own beast. He brought him to an inn and took care of him. He inconvenienced himself and dropped his own plans to help the injured man.

He did not stop there in his help. The next day, he found that the injured man had not recovered completely. Before he departed on his way, he paid the inn keeper 2 pence and said to him, “take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.” A daily wage earner earns about 1 penny a day. The 2 pence was not a small amount to give to care for a stranger. The fact that he was prepared to care for him until he fully recovered, as seen by his words to the inn keeper, showed the love of God in action! Helping others without any inconvenience and self sacrifice is not true help. There is always a cost to the true helper. This Samaritan helped a Jew whom he did not know. The Jews probably hated him. Jews had no dealings with Samaritans, for they believed that Samaritans would make them unclean if they came into contact with them. Jews would not enter the city of Samaria and would rather inconvenience themselves by travelling around the city, to go from north to south and vice versa to avoid coming into contact with these half Jews and half Gentiles! Yet this Samaritan set aside all prejudices and helped the injured Jew above and beyond what was expected. This is what Jesus meant when he said that a person who has eternal life will love God with all his heart, soul, strength and mind, and his neighbour as himself. What the Samaritan did to the injured Jew are all the things that one would do to himself to ensure his own full recovery if he were injured!

Jesus wanted this lawyer to search deep into his own soul that he may find salvation in Christ and asked him the question, “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?” The first two were seen as the most religious people on earth as they were the God appointed mediators between God and sinful man! However, the Samaritan was the despised unclean rejected soul that no Jew would have any contact with, whom the lawyer knew full well, being one who knew the law of God. Instead of answering that it was the Samaritan, he replied, “He that shewed mercy on him.” He even refused to say the word “Samaritan”! That was how deep the prejudice

was. The lawyer's own words and prejudice condemned him. He did not have eternal life even though he knew the law of God because he did not have the love of God! He could not love unconditionally. Yet our loving Lord still wanted him to rethink his prejudice. Jesus said to him, "Go, and do thou likewise." In short, it is still not too late to repent and find salvation in Christ. Now that he knows his own sins, he needs to repent. Now that he knows what it takes to have eternal life, he must not turn his back on the way to eternal life because it is only through Christ and not through his external good works, even though the works are Christian works!

The one who has agape love will love unconditionally and sacrificially, like the Samaritan!

Conclusion – To love God is to love all man. This love of God that is unconditional and sacrificial is powerful. It takes away all transgressions, especially the transgressions of prejudice and self-righteousness. A truly born again believer will demonstrate this agape love that has been given to him when he accepted Christ as Lord and Saviour. This truth is affirmed by the apostle John in **1 John 4:19-21**, "We love him, because he first loved us. **20** If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? **21** And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."